

Horizons

A NEWSLETTER OF WILKES-BARRE VA MEDICAL CENTER // JUNE 2021



The "Isopod" can supply up to 16 hours of continuous negative pressure isolation, it can also be utilized to transport infected patients long-distance while maintaining containment.

WILKES-BARRE VA READY TO IMPLEMENT EMERGENCY ISOLATION UNITS IF AND WHEN NEEDED

Over the past year and a half, we have all heard about preventing the spread of airborne illnesses such as the Coronavirus. At the Wilkes-Barre VA, prevention is a priority along with being prepared for the worst-case health crisis scenarios.

Wilkes-Barre has gone through great lengths to identify, treat and isolate Coronavirus patients for everyone's protection. Negative pressure rooms were established along with restricting visitation other than in a hospice type of setting.

Part of being prepared for the worst-case infection crisis, the VA purchased several portable cot-mounted "ISOPODs" which are negative pressure isolation systems designed for individual patients. These isopods have been used worldwide during the EBOLA and MERS outbreaks with great success. The portability of these systems enables the hospital to transport compromised patients between other areas of the facility and can supply up to 16 hours of continuous negative pressure isolation. Hot swap and pass-through ports allow medical professionals to bring oxygen, IV lines, and other provision of medical care to the patient without risk of exposure.

The technological innovations of these portable isolation systems minimize the health risk of spreading airborne pathogens for both patients and healthcare workers. If ever needed, these units allow the Wilkes-Barre VA to have a crisis ready isolation solution while providing the best possible care.

A Message from the Director



As the nation continues to administer COVID-19 vaccinations and pandemic-related restrictions start to lift, many Veterans are anticipating life getting back to normal. Although traveling, being with friends and resuming enjoyable

activities will be great, some may continue to worry about the virus and choose to extend their isolation. With so much conflicting information being circulated about the continued pandemic, one can understand how anxiety can be overwhelming.

The nation and the VA have seen a huge increase in the demand for mental health counseling across all ages because of the pandemic.

At the Wilkes-Barre VA, our Suicide Prevention Team has seen an increase in Veterans in crisis situations. Some feel overwhelmed and are experiencing additional pressure due to loneliness and not having adequate support within their environment. Some Veterans have also turned to substance abuse to cope. This not only impacts the Veteran but their family member, as well.

We want Veterans who find themselves in crisis to know; the VA is here to help, 24 hours a day / 7 days a week, through the VA's Veteran Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255 – press 1).

The VA has taken a proactive approach in dealing with the emotional and physical toll the pandemic has had on a lot of our Veterans. We will continue to provide the best medical, mental health and substance abuse support available, so one day soon we can get back to our pre pandemic lives. We realize it may take some time for some Veterans to adjust but rest assured that the Wilkes-Barre VA will be here if and when needed.

Sincerely,



Russell E Lloyd, Director

VA Nurse Providing Motivation and Smiles to All

A few years ago, third shift Wilkes-Barre VA nurse Colleen Rogers noticed that someone had decorated the bulletin board on her floor with a winter scene. That scene stayed up long into spring season with no change, so Colleen updated the board with her own Easter theme. Well, one thing led to another, and since Colleen received so many compliments, she decided to keep things fresh and new and update the board almost every month with the changing of the seasons and holidays.

Colleen takes great pride in decorating the board. Most times, featuring motivational sayings and the names of her hard-working co-workers. Several staff members even asked to keep various items from expired boards, so they could decorate their lockers. Colleen feels that is the ultimate complement of her work.



"I love to see their faces as they're walking by the boards and smile. In this crazy world we live in, I'm happy to be able to brighten someone's day."
COLLEEN ROGERS – RN, WILKES-BARRE VA MEDICAL CENTER



Colleen's favorite holiday, Saint Patrick's Day, features a board with gnomes and a rainbow. There is a bucket of real chocolate coins at the end that can satisfy anyone's chocolate craving.

Colleen hopes that by keeping the board decorated and fresh, it will give her co-workers the extra inspiration to continue being the best they can be during the pandemic and beyond. She hopes that the positive energy is contagious!



World War II Veteran Clarence Smoyer signs a copy of the book written about him, titled "SPEARHEAD"

Army Tank Gunner at the Battle of Cologne Donates Book About His WWII Experience

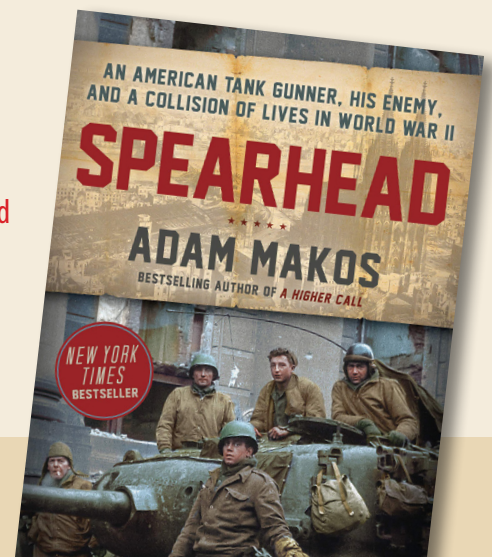
When walking the halls of the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, you see many Veterans. Each one has their own unique story of service to our country. But every once in a while, you come across a Veteran who has a story that needs to be told. That Veteran is 97-year-old Clarence Smoyer from Allentown. For years Clarence has been getting his medical care here at the Wilkes-Barre VA and during a recent visit, we learned about his story.

Clarence was an Army Tank Gunner and one of the best, having served in the 3rd Armored Division- the "Spearhead" division during the Battle of Cologne in Germany during WWII. The battle took place on March 5, 1945, with one of America's newest and untested Sherman tanks called the Pershing "super tank." Battling through the ruins of Cologne, Clarence's tank division would come into battle with Germany's best super tank called the Panther. The clash has been called "The Greatest Tank Duel in History."

During our visit, he graciously donated a signed copy of the book to our Medical Center. The best-selling book, Variety Magazine reports will be made into a motion picture in the near future.

We owe a great debt to the many Veterans who fought for the very freedoms we enjoy in the United States today. The thought that we could speak to a real-life hero who had such a tremendous impact on our victory over Germany was both extraordinary and humbling.

The book titled "Spearhead" by author Adam Makos, captures what was running through Clarence's mind during that victorious battle and how he dealt with the aftermath years later.



NEW COORDINATOR Has a Real Passion for Her Position

Statistics tell us that an average of 17 Veterans die by suicide every day. Therefore, Suicide Prevention is a very important element at the Wilkes-Barre VA and throughout the VA Healthcare system. So, when the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center was looking to fill its Suicide Prevention Coordinator Position, Angelique Cortez knew she was the one for the job... and she got it.

The first thing Angelique Cortez shared was that she feels very privileged to be named Wilkes-Barre's New Suicide Prevention Coordinator. For Angelique, earning the position has been a culmination of both hard work and applying her experiences helping others.

Angelique's journey started in Guyana, South America. At age twelve, her family moved to Brooklyn, New York where she spent her teenage years, before ultimately moving to the Poconos where she has spent virtually all her adult life. Angelique graduated from Marywood University with her Master's in Social Work and recently completed her Doctorate degree at NYU.

For the past eight years Angelique's inner passion to help others has led her to do a lot of community work on coalition-building in Monroe County, PA. She chairs the local community Suicide Prevention Coalition, which is a grassroots group that came into existence in 2013. The Coalition's goal is to educate the community on signs and symptoms of suicide, and to link them to resources.

"To be in this position as Suicide Prevention Coordinator, it's hard to believe. It has been a position that I wanted for a long time and I really feel that being here gives me an opportunity to maximize all my previous Knowledge and Skills."

— Angelique Cortez, DSW -Suicide Prevention Coordinator

Angelique is very passionate about suicide prevention and what she likes a great deal is that the VA has a lot of resources and services that can be utilized for maximum benefit to help Veterans at need.



Angelique Cortez is Wilkes-Barre's New Suicide Prevention Coordinator.

"I think presently the program is in a good place where we can do a lot to enhance where it's at. We're always going to have crisis situations, that's just the nature of the job we're doing, but one of my goals is to not have our Veterans reach crisis mode before we help them."

— Angelique Cortez, DSW -Suicide Prevention Coordinator

Angelique would like to see more of a focus on training the entire VA caregiver staff on identifying suicidal risk factors, problems, and issues so we can more quickly enhance their care and get them connected with what they need. I would

like to provide education training to work in collaboration with all departments and all service lines.

"I am looking at really maximizing our roles, meaning myself and all the Suicide Prevention case managers to kind of have a blueprint of how we work. I want to be able to stay on top of our high-risk Veterans making weekly or bi-weekly calls to get to know them and be part of their care."

— Angelique Cortez, DSW -Suicide Prevention Coordinator

Through more in-service training, Angelique wants to make sure her staff stays on top of what the protocols are and how to follow through with suicide risk assessments to make sure they are doing the right thing at the right time.

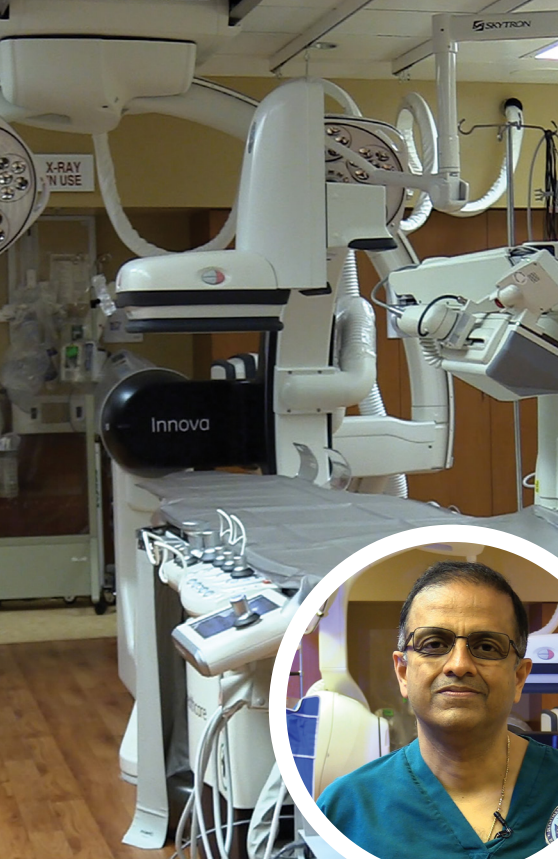
One of the many areas that Angelique is really looking to maximize are the support and services for our Veterans who are compromised by suicidality, impulsivity and/or addiction to drugs and alcohol.

Angelique feels she is in the right place. Her passion and life experiences have led her to a position at the Wilkes-Barre VA that she feels she was destined to have. She feels she can truly make a positive difference in the lives of our at-risk Veterans. With her plans to grow her service, there is no doubt that at-need Veterans are truly in good hands moving forward.

Veterans Crisis Line



1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1



"The PCI Robot that we employ here is usually only found in larger cities, we are very fortunate to be able to offer this advanced technology here at Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center."

– Dr. Pancholy



WILKES-BARRE VA'S HEART CATHETERIZATION LABORATORY, One of the Best in the Region

EIGHT CONVENIENT LOCATIONS TO SERVE YOU

Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

1111 East End Blvd., Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711
570-824-3521 / 877-928-2621

Allentown Community Based Outpatient Clinic

3110 Hamilton Blvd., Allentown, PA 18103
610-599-0127

Columbia County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

225 Columbia Mall Drive, Bloomsburg, PA 17815
570-316-4116

Northampton County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

701 Slate Belt Blvd., Bangor, PA 18013-9341
610-599-0127

Sayre Community Based Outpatient Clinic

1537 Elmira Street, Sayre, PA 18840
570-888-6803

Tobyhanna Community Based Outpatient Clinic

Tobyhanna Army Depot, Bldg. 220
Tobyhanna, PA 18466
570-615-8341

Wayne County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

600 Maple Avenue, Honesdale, PA 18431
570-251-6543

Williamsport Community Based Outpatient Clinic

1705 Warren Avenue, 3rd Fl., Ste. 304
Williamsport, PA 17701
570-322-4791

When it comes to the heart, Veterans are in good hands at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center. The Director of the Wilkes-Barre's Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory, Dr Samir Pancholy, is very proud of what the VA offers, a very experienced team with state-of-the-art equipment.

"We have one of the more experienced staff in the region. Each of our cardiologists have over twenty-five years of experience performing coronary procedures, and our Nurse Manager and Lead Technologist also have over twenty years of Cath Lab experience."

– Dr. Pancholy

Wilkes-Barre's Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory is equipped with a newly upgraded GE X-Ray system and hemodynamic monitoring system. The lab is now enhanced with a specialized intravascular (inside the coronary) ultrasound systems that features co-registration which measures directly onto the Cath Image (angiogram) and provides advanced guidance to help precisely locate the area of concern. The Wilkes-Barre VA's Cath Lab is one of the only laboratories

throughout the region that features advanced co-registration imaging.

When coronary stenting is needed, the Wilkes-Barre VA can utilize the Corindus PCI Robot which enables the cardiologist to make movements with millimeter precision. Studies have shown that the PCI robot decreases the number of stents needed to treat a blockage. It also reduces the amount of radiation that the Veteran and the cardiologist receive, and is also the most commonly used in radial artery access (through the wrist) in our Cath Lab. Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center is the only Cardiac Cath Lab in the VA's VISN 4 network with this innovative technology.

Dr. Pancholy would like Veterans to know that besides a great deal of procedural experience and advanced technological equipment, the Wilkes-Barre VA Cath Lab is poised to handle any emergency; Veterans can feel confident in our care. The entire Cardiology and Cardiac Cath Lab team at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center is honored to serve our Veterans with state-of-the-art modalities and expertise.

Call Center

1-877-928-2621

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wilkes-barre.va.gov



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